

**MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**  
**ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE**

**INTERVIEW**

WITH

**CAROL A. BURNS**

Interview conducted by Richard Nollan

May 1, 2002

Edited by Carolyn E. Lipscomb

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## CONSENT FORM FOR MLA ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

This confirms my understanding and agreement with the Medical Library Association (MLA) concerning my participation in an oral history interview as a part of MLA's Oral History Program.

1. I agree to be interviewed by Richard Nollan on May 1, 2002. I understand that my interview will be recorded, and that a transcript and edited version of my interview will later be created. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to review and edit the edited transcript before its release.
2. I hereby grant and assign all right, title and interest to any and all recordings and transcripts of my interview including copyright [and all rights subsumed thereunder] to the MLA. I will be given a copy of the edited transcript for my personal use. I understand that the transfer of these rights to MLA confers no obligations on MLA to promote, market, or otherwise make publicly available copies of the interview.
3. One or more edited and/or condensed versions of the interview, approved by me, may be disseminated by MLA as it deems appropriate.
4. I understand that the original, unedited recording of my interview and the original unedited transcript will be maintained in the MLA Archives at the National Library of Medicine, or at such other place as MLA may reasonably designate, and may be made available to researchers who have demonstrated that they have appropriate qualifications. I further understand that the original unedited recording and/or the original unedited transcript will be made available with the following restrictions (Check one):  
☒ No restrictions  
☐ The following specified portions of the interview will not be made available to anyone until \_\_\_\_\_.

Carol A. Burns

Name of Interviewee

Carol A. Burns

Signature

Date 5/1/2002

RICHARD NOLLAN

Name of MLA Interviewer(s)

Richard Nollan

Signature

Date 5/1/2002

Accepted by : Carla Funn

Date 12/21/04



## **Carol A. Burns**

### **Biographical Statement**

Carol A. Burns, M.A.L.S., M.A., served as director of the Robert W. Woodruff Health Sciences Center Library (formerly A. W. Calhoun Medical Library) at Emory University from 1984 to her retirement in 2000 and spent her career as a medical librarian there. She participated in the seminal period of audiovisual librarianship in the 1970s as audiovisual librarian and a Regional Medical Library Program media consultant. She also held positions of associate librarian for services to the public and acting director. Upon the death of Miriam Libbey, she was appointed to the director position. She was active in HeSCA, Georgia Health Sciences Library Association, Atlanta Health Sciences Libraries Consortium, and Southern Chapter of the Medical Library Association.

Ms. Burns played a key role in the Atlanta-Tbilisi Health Partnership between institutions in Atlanta, Georgia, and Tbilisi, Georgia, to help the country provide better health care for its citizens, including through library services for medical education.

She co-authored a research paper for the Southern Chapter Research Committee that won the Medical Library Association's Ida and George Eliot Prize in 2000: Dee CR, Rankin JA, Burns CA. Using scientific evidence to improve hospital library services: Southern Chapter/Medical Library Association journal usage study. 1998 July;86(3):301-6. She was elected a fellow of MLA in 2001.

Richard Nollan: My name is Richard Nollan, and we're here at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center Library with Carol Burns to talk about her career in the library profession, as a medical librarian and to talk about MLA and Southern Chapter.

We're in Memphis. It's an overcast day outside. We may see the sun come out a little bit. It's April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2002, and it is ...

Carol A. Burns: No, it's May 1<sup>st</sup>.

N: May 1<sup>st</sup>, oh my goodness. May 1<sup>st</sup> and it's ten minutes to two in the afternoon. Carol, thank you for being with us today.

B: My pleasure.

N: And we're going to talk about your career as a librarian, but I think what I'd like to do is to go all the way back to the beginning to talk about where you were born and where you were brought up, and a little bit about your educational background, and how you got interested in librarianship.

B: Well I was born in New Jersey, suburb of New York City, where my parents were teachers, and I really never was interested in being a librarian as I was growing up. I was going to be a teacher. So that's what I set out to do. My parents were teachers. My sisters were teachers; about everybody in my family was a teacher. So I was going to be a teacher.

And I went off to college, to Wittenberg University in Ohio. I went there mainly because my two sisters did not go there, and I was tired of being the youngest of three. I was tired of being their, known as their sister.

So I went to Wittenberg University where I got my bachelor's degree and headed out west to teach school just as I always had wanted to do. Actually that was a great year of teaching, but what interfered with my teaching career was marriage.

N: What made you want to become a teacher?

B: I guess it was just in my genes really. I saw how much my parents enjoyed it. I ...

N: So they were teachers?

B: They were both teachers. I sensed that it was a rewarding profession that you would be helping other young people to learn and to achieve whatever they could in life. And it seemed like a worthwhile thing to do, and I wanted to do something worthwhile. So teacher was it.

Of course, this was in the '60s and the opportunities for women were beginning to open up, but still it wasn't obvious that you could go out and become an engineer or even a doctor, although I wouldn't have chosen either of those careers frankly. No interest in those.

N: So you became a teacher and then you got married.

B: I did and that took me back to Michigan where my husband was in a Ph.D. program at the University of Michigan, and I taught school there as well, the first year of our marriage, but when he was drafted into the service and moved down to Kentucky, I went down there and never did teach in Kentucky. I worked at [W.T.] Grant's department store, which no longer exists. So that gave me a taste of sort of the real world. And I decided I would rather retreat back into the so-called ivory tower of the university setting.

And maybe at that point I started thinking about alternative careers, because when we got back to Michigan there were no teaching jobs available in the early '70s, and I kind of oh tried this and that. Got my master's in history, was an editorial assistant on the journal for a while.

And then ...

N: What journal was that?

B: The journal of Comparative Studies in Society and History, and it was published at the university, well, it was actually published by Cambridge University Press, but the editorial offices were at the University of Michigan. And that was an interesting job. I learned a lot about the publishing industry and peer review process and copy editing, which I wasn't too fond of.

But that's how I kind of fell into library science, and really I think I kind of fell into it. They had graduate assistantships at Michigan in the library school, and I applied and got one. So it seemed like something worthwhile to do with my time while we were waiting for my husband to finish his degree. And I don't think I knew at that time that I would end up being a librarian, but I really did get kind of hooked on the medical information and working in the medical library. I think that's what really got those hooks into me.

N: So that's where it started?

B: Yes, pretty much an economic decision at that point. I won't say my heart took me there. My heart's there now, but it took a while I think to develop that.

N: So you worked in a medical library and that got you interested in librarianship and did you go, is that when you...?

B: Actually I started library school at the same time that I started this assistantship in the medical library and I've often wondered, had I not had the assistantship in the medical library, if I would have even finished the program, because the course work, I won't say it was uninteresting to me, but it was really the sense of working in the library that captured my imagination.

N: Do you remember the name of the library?

B: It was the Medical Center Library at the University of Michigan, and they had five professional librarians at that time, and they were desperate for help. So they threw me

into interlibrary loan, into reference work, MEDLINE was just coming online at that time. We used TWX machines for interlibrary loans, just practically the dark ages. And there was just something about the excitement of working with the medical faculty at Michigan that just really got me excited about the profession. I had a good experience there.

N: Do you remember any of the people you worked in those days?

B: Jim Crooks was the young reference librarian, and he was really a wonderful mentor for me. Laura [Hawke], oh goodness, I've forgotten her last name suddenly, was the head of the reference department. And then there was Jean Barnard and Helen Miranda, who always salted her bread on her sandwich, not the meat, but the bread. And then Dave Maxfield was the director, and he was a special guy. And the other person I remember the most who may have been as influential in hooking me into library sciences was Dr. [Lawrence] Kass, who was writing a book on pernicious anemia, and he was in the library all the time and was determined to uncover every reference to pernicious anemia going all the way back to the beginning. And I was so taken by his dedication to the literature and saw how important it was to him, that that really helped me kind of get the sense of yes, this is an important thing to do.

N: Now you worked in the Medical Center Library and with these people, and how long did you work there before you went into library school?

B: Actually they started at the same time, library school, and this assistantship. And that was in January of, or February of 1972, no, '73, and then I finished my degree in the summer of '74. So the idea was that you went to school half time and you worked about 30 hours a week in the library.

And at Michigan at that time, in medical librarianship, was Gwen Cruzat and there are a number of us around the country who owe our beginning success to Gwen.

N: Say a little bit more about her.

B: Gwen was phenomenal, a black woman, in a field where there weren't very many black women. And she had, as I recall, a background in hospital librarianship in Detroit, although I'm not 100% sure about that.

N: At Wayne State perhaps?

B: No, I think she was in one of the hospitals in Detroit. But of course, when I knew her, she had been on the faculty at Michigan for some time, and brought a real practical approach to the teaching of medical reference and medical library administration and worked our little old fannies off. But we all learned a lot.

And she really held you accountable for, for not only doing your assignments, but for thinking about what you were doing and I know there were a lot of students who were intimidated by her, but by the same token, we all realized that we were learning a lot.



And I was lucky in that I was working in the medical library. That gave me a lot of advantage over the students who were just enrolled in the course. So I did very well in that course, mainly because it was really just part of my work, and I enjoyed it. She's a wonderful mentor.

N: Were there any other professors or people at the school at that time that you recall?

B: Well probably the most interesting course I had was in prison libraries. And it was taught, actually by a person whose Ph.D. was in English, and his interest was bibliotherapy with institutionalized people, whether they were prisoners or mental, in a mental hospital or, you know, in other institutional settings.

And we actually devised a whole program for the Milan Federal Correctional Institution, just south of Ann Arbor, and I worked there one evening a week for about over a year, as part of that program.

N: Now what is bibliotherapy?

B: The idea is that for people who are incarcerated or in some sort of institution where they're limited in terms of what activities they can undertake, that reading is a productive way for them to spend their time, help keep them out of trouble, you know, whatever. And so we had a budget from the prison of \$50 a week to spend buying books, and we would take them in and we had four inmates who were our catalogers and they devised a computerized catalog for us. It was pretty simple, but we certainly didn't use MARC and AACR2 or anything, I guess it was AACR1 back then.

But we had a functional catalog and we built a functional library. The only book that they would not allow us to take in that we selected were the writings of Chairman Mao, I guess they thought that was subversive or whatever, but we bought mysteries and westerns, some soft pornography, other fiction. We had a lot of reference books and other things like that, and a whole sort of career orientation center, because this was a medium security prison and most of these people were expected to go back into society and they wanted them to know what careers they could learn about and maybe pursue when they returned to their home community.

N: Were they also taking classes at the same time or was this just a library for them to use?

B: Our function was basically library. They must have had some educational programs, because they had a whole education department, but I just don't know and we were part of that department, but I don't know what the educational offerings were.

N: How long did you do this?

B: I did that, really prison libraries, I think was one of the first courses I took, and then I continued to work out there at the prison until we moved to Atlanta in '74. So it was not a year-and-a-half, but close to that, I think. It's very interesting. In fact I thought about being a prison librarian when we moved to Atlanta, but prisons here didn't have libraries.

N: Yes, that's true. Worked out on the road I think most of the time.

B: That's right, those guys on the chain gang didn't have time to read.

N: Well how long did you, well, how long was the program at the library school? And then what did you do after that?

B: Normally I think the program was a one-year master's program at Michigan, but because I was working 30 hours a week, it took longer for me to finish that degree. I think that's the way it was. I actually finished my degree after I went to work at Emory. My last course was that course for regional media consultants that I took down there in the summer of '74. So I went from being a student at Michigan to basically being a student for the first two months on the job at Emory.

N: Why did you go, how did you get down to Emory's?

B: That was mainly a factor of a two-career family deciding that the guy who would have the hard time finding a job should find the job first. So my husband took a job at Emory University in the history department. And I actually applied both for teaching positions and library positions when we were moving down here. And I guess I decided on the library position, mainly because it was at Emory and I just felt that that would be a place that I'd like to work, and we were thinking of starting our family, so I really wasn't sure whether I would be continuing my career on a full-time basis or not. And I will give, give the library a chance and see how that goes and it went well.

N: That was in 1974 that you moved down.

B: That was in '74. We arrived in Atlanta on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and it was hotter than Hades and I can tell you, I really did not think I would even survive until the 8<sup>th</sup> of July when I was supposed to start work in the library. I was so astounded by the heat and humidity.

N: Well that was your impression of Atlanta. What was your impression of Emory in those first days, those early experiences?

B: Emory was a, I had never heard of Emory University before we came there, although, many people told us that Emory had a very good reputation in the south. And I think that was true. It was very well respected in Atlanta and in the south and pretty much served the southern region, and then also a sizable population of students from the northeast, from New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, who wanted to go to a private school, but maybe didn't get into one of the Ivy League schools or whatever, I don't know. And of course Emory billed itself as the Harvard of the south.

So in recent years, I think they try to bill Harvard as the Emory of the north. But back then it was more of a regional focus. It had a very family oriented atmosphere. They had something called faculty camp, which I think is almost unique in what I know of colleges and universities. Where faculty from all over the university would go on a

retreat the weekend before the semester started in the fall, and just have three days, not only discussion, hikes, sporting events, just a whole host of activities that you could engage in.

And for me it was wonderful to do that the first year we were there, because I met a number of faculty and chairs from the medical school, as well as from the college and other areas of the university. So it was great.

N: Now your first job at Emory was as?

B: Audiovisual librarian. They had never had an audiovisual librarian.

N: What kind of audiovisuals did they have?

B: We had filmstrips, remember that technology, super 8 loop films, slides, some 16 millimeter motion pictures. That was basically it. Video, there were videotapes, you know, this was in the era of the regional medical program, which was designed to get medical information out into the rural areas and Emory had the Georgia Regional Medical Television Network. And the library actually circulated the videotapes, which were basically made from different conferences, grand rounds and so forth, basically the talking head kind of production.

So that was one of my primary jobs, to circulate a couple thousand videotapes a year, maybe seven or 8,000 a year to the hospitals throughout the state of Georgia. So I became plugged into, not so much the libraries in those hospitals, because a lot of them didn't have libraries in the '70s. But to someone in the education office, or the administrative office of the hospital, and as my career developed, those contacts really became very useful to me.

N: So you started off as a audiovisuals librarian, and that lasted for several years or?

B: Four or five years, yes till 1979.

N: and what happened in '79?

B: The person who had been the associate librarian for services to the public [Tena Crenshaw], left to go to the University of Miami and I applied for her job and got it. I didn't meet all the qualifications and I remember being worried about that, that Miriam Libbey was such a marvelous person to work for and she wouldn't tell me she intended to hire me. She made me go through what I think was a fairly legitimate search process. And I was convinced the other guy was going to get it of course. But I was happily appointed to that position.

And in many ways that was the most fun, to work at that level of administration in the library, because I had a lot of contact with the faculty and students. I had a lot of contact with all of the staff in the department that public services covered, just about everything other than cataloging and periodicals control and so forth. So I enjoyed that role a lot.

N: So in 1979 you became an administrator, you moved up from a professional to more of an administrative position. By this time, had you also started going to MLA or Southern Chapter meetings or where you aware?

B: Southern Chapter.

N: Southern Chapter.

B: And I never went to MLA until 1984. I was one of the people who got to stay home and mind the shop while everybody else went over to MLA. I was active in the Health Sciences Communication Associations, HeSCA. And it had recently started a, I think it was called the Biomedical Libraries Section, well something like that. And this was a group of librarians who was kind of infiltrating the group of folks who did audiovisual production and the use of media and teaching and so forth. And largely a male dominated group, and it was a wonderful experience.

We were welcomed immediately into the group. I formed a lifetime friendship with Shelley Bader. She and I grew up through that association together. And we just had a lot of fun, but we accomplished a lot. I remember in particular one program we did. They had a media competition every year where all the new productions could be entered into a competition. And they also had what we would call a learning resource center where people could preview other productions. So the biomedical libraries group decided we would create a catalog of these objects so the people could readily identify, you know, this is what we do, right.

Well, with audiovisuals it was hard, because often they didn't have a title or they didn't have the same title on all parts of the production or they didn't have a production date, or they didn't say who produced it. I mean you could imagine. So we created, we did a little study really of all of these and we gave a presentation at one of the sessions where we basically criticized them for not providing the information that librarians need to catalog these materials.

And we were a little nervous about that at first, but it really went over well. I mean people were rolling in the aisles after a while when you would show examples of some of these things. And the people that produced them were right there in the audience.

N: Uh-ho.

B: But they could see for themselves that if you want people to use your productions, you got to do better than this. So that was a very worthwhile thing I think for the librarians to do in the context of that association.

N: After 1979, you were in the administration, who else, who was the director of the library at that time?

B: Miriam Libbey was still the director, and Jean Lee was the head of technical services. Back then the library had just the two departments, public services and technical services. And Linda Markwell who's still around was, let's see, by then she may, she was either

still in the regional program or she had just gone down to become the librarian at the Grady Branch Library downtown.

N: So you were in this position as Associate Librarian and you were active in HeSCA and you were also attending Southern Chapter meetings. What were the Southern Chapter meetings like at this time?

B: Oh gosh, the first one I went to was in Augusta, and I think that was 1981. And Miriam had me give a paper there about something, I honestly don't remember, it had something to do with journals though. And I was scared to death. It was the first time I had made a presentation in front of a group of librarians and although I had plenty of teaching experience and wasn't afraid to talk to groups, it felt very odd and uncomfortable to me. But you know, everybody was so nice about it, and I think that's the beauty of the Southern Chapter. You can start out and it's a very supportive environment, and you can learn how to give presentations. You can learn how to become a leader in the association, and they give you those opportunities, and then they don't make you feel bad if you screw up a little bit, or you know don't do a perfect job. They really seem to appreciate the effort that people put forth.

So I found the Southern Chapter to be a very supportive professional association, and it was probably only later that I realized how much fun the group has together, when I became, you know, better acquainted with more of the folks.

N: Do you remember some of the people you met in those early meetings?

B: Gosh, I can't say that I remember them from the meetings per se. What I remember more is the contact that I had with all of the different medical schools through the regional media consultant program, which was sponsored by the National Library of Medicine under the umbrella of the Regional Medical Library Program. And that took me around to a lot of the different schools where probably Tom Basler and Dottie Spencer at the Medical College of Georgia were the first two that I really kind of latched on to as folks who would be helpful to me and supportive and were fun to be around and yet you could learn a lot from them.

And well I remember Jocelyn Rankin being new at Mercer and trying to build that program there and how impressed I was that someone who was more or less my age was in that kind of position. And I think mainly the others that I remember are more from the Atlanta scene, because at about the same time the Georgia Health Sciences Library Association was being formed, and the Atlanta Health Science Libraries Consortium, and Mrs. Libbey was very involved in the formation of all of those, and encouraged those of us on the staff to become involved. And because of my audiovisual training and work, I was playing a role that many of them just wanted to learn more about—audiovisuals. And we taught workshops for hospital librarians and others.

So I think more than Southern Chapter, my early career, the folks I got to know were really more through those activities.

N: Well from '79 to '83 you were Associate Librarian and then in '83 you became acting director, and how was that?

B: Well of course that's when Miriam Libbey had a stroke and she was such a fabulous mentor and teacher and administrator that I think we were all just in shock when she had the stroke. I was not even in the library that day. I was on my way back from a canoeing vacation. And I called up to the library to let one of the library staff who had been staying in our house while we were gone, I called to just let her know we got home a day early, and if she had planned to stay in the house that night, that was fine, but you know, otherwise I wanted her to know we were home.

And when she answered the phone, I knew that something was wrong. And all I remember was, I just said to my husband, take everything out of the car, I've got to get over to the library. And we just threw all the gear into the carport and off I went. And no one expected her to survive the weekend, which she did.

And for a while I think we thought she might actually be able to come back to work, because she made rapid improvement for a month or so, but then she reached a plateau and never was able to really resume a fully functioning life again. But it was just such a shock to everyone, not only our sense of disorientation within the library, but just the sense of personal loss, because she, I wouldn't say she was a friend to all of us, but we all had a very strong attachment to her. And that year is simply a blur in my mind when I was acting director. I know I lived through it, but I honestly can't tell you specific things that happened that year at all.

N: So how did you become acting director? Were you appointed?

B: I was, I think because I had been head of public services and had so many contacts throughout the medical school that when it came time to decide between the associate director for technical services or me, they knew me. And they asked me to become acting director and obviously you say yes under those circumstances.

N: Who became director, no, no you were the acting director and there was a search process.

B: There was not a search process, and this was a bit controversial among my soon-to-be colleagues. I think there were a number of people who were looking forward to competing for that position, and I myself, was wondering whether I would be a candidate or not. I hadn't really decided that I wanted to be a director. I liked being the associate director, and I knew that to become a director puts you in a totally different capacity vis-à-vis the administration and the staff in the library. I kind of liked where I was.

So while I was considering whether I would be a candidate, I guess they were considering that they would just simply not do a search and appoint me as the permanent director. And I remember being shocked when the question was posed and in hindsight I wished I had known how to negotiate a few perks for the library along the way, but I really didn't know much about that.

And I didn't say yes right away, but as I thought about it, I thought that yes was the right answer. And I was surprised I guess that I got the cold shoulder when I went to MLA in 1984 from people who seemed pretty annoyed with me that I was now the director and they hadn't had a chance to compete for the position.

N: Was there anything more, was there anything in the background that they were reacting to as well, or was it just the fact that they were denied an opportunity to compete.

B: I think that's the way I saw it, that they were denied that opportunity. I don't recall feeling anything other than that, other than I was just surprised by it. And you know, in some cases from people I had worked closely with, in other cases from people that I knew, but hadn't worked closely with, and in some cases, people I didn't know from Adam or Eve. And you know, it was very strange to go to your first MLA and not be cordially greeted by your colleagues.

N: Congratulated even, yes.

B: And luckily, the reason I really was at MLA was because Miriam Libbey had been named a fellow, and people wanted to hear how she was doing. She was still alive at that time. And I was asked to accept in her honor and actually say a few words to the association.

N: Where was this meeting?

B: Denver.

N: Denver.

B: Yes, and so because I was at the honors and awards ceremony, I was invited to the president's reception, and I ended up chatting with Bob Cheshier and just felt comfortable saying to him how strange I felt at my first MLA and being kind of you know, given this treatment by so many of the directors. And he was very helpful to me, and he said, you know, Carol, just look at it this way. They asked you the question. You didn't tell them to ask you the question, you didn't pay them to ask you the question. They asked you the question and you could say yes or you could say no. And you said yes.

So, you know, the rest of it is really pretty much irrelevant, no matter what these people think. And I thought yes, you know that's right. I didn't set them up to do this. They did it, and I said yes, and that's the way it is. And that really was very helpful to me. I've always appreciated the fact that he sensed that I was troubled and helped me kind of talk through that.

N: Do you, what else do you remember about that Denver conference?

B: It was a solar eclipse.

N: During the conference?

B: We all went out to watch, it wasn't full in Denver, it was full in Atlanta and I had to miss that, but yes, I remember there was a solar eclipse. I don't really remember much else about the Denver conference. Actually when it comes right down to it, I don't remember a lot about the conferences and the content of the conferences themselves. I remember more the value of the networking, the interpersonal relations that developed, the opportunity to sit and chat with people. Some people you'd known for a while, others that you heard give a paper or visited their poster session and then you have a chance to develop some new connections. I remember listening to Dick Miller from Stanford talk about cataloging and you know, getting your online catalog in sync with I think this is back in the days of Gopher even, and I thought, you know, I've never been a cataloger. I had the mandatory cataloging course, but I was fascinated by it.

N: We were up to AACR2 by this time, weren't we?

B: When I was still head of public services, we implemented AACR2 at Emory, and I was on one of the working groups, campus-wide working groups, mainly because I think it dawned on Miriam Libbey that the changes that were being made with the cataloging roles would have a very dramatic effect on the way users approached the card catalog. And that we jolly well ought to have some people from public services sitting in on some of these meetings, and so I was the designated hitter from the medical library.

And that was fascinating to see the challenges that catalogers have to face and why they develop these arcane rules and yet still be able to talk about what problems the users would encounter when you began changing the official form of entry for a corporate entity for example, from one to another. So it was interesting.

N: Now from the, from your first MLA meeting in '84, did you start going regularly every year?

B: Pretty much so, I didn't go to all of them, but.

N: And you were going to the Southern Chapter meetings as well?

B: I was more faithful at the Southern Chapter meetings probably, the national ones, but particularly after becoming director, I tried to go to the national, the regional and the state association meetings as well as to the Association of Academic Health Sciences Library Directors. So I felt like I was on the road a lot more, but I think it was important, not only to represent the library and the institution at those meetings. But again, that's where you have an opportunity to meet and talk with people and learn from them, and I definitely needed to learn a lot about being a library director.

N: Yes, well a lot of things, you were director for 10 years, is that right?

B: 17.

N: 17. What were the biggest changes during that time?



B: Oh gosh, I knew this was a question. But obviously automation is an answer to that. The way we do everything has changed in the course of my career. Computers were just being applied to the circulation systems and to serials control. Back in the early '70s, we didn't have DOCLINE or anything like that. We did have the TWX machine though. We did have MEDLINE, actually online.

So in many ways, automation has changed things, but not really that dramatically. How we do it, maybe has changed, but not really what we do or why we do it. So yes, automation has been a big change. I think for me at Emory, Emory completely changed in that same period of time. In, I think it was 1979, we got a huge gift to the endowment of over \$100 million and Emory decided, OK, we're not going to be happy being the regional, you know, the good regional school. We are going for national and international reputations.

And that really has changed the nature of the university and also the role that the libraries played in that, because, particularly in the health sciences that meant a much greater emphasis on research, rather than or not rather than, it's kind of in addition to the traditional emphasis on the clinical service and the teaching role. Emory was always known as a fine place to train clinicians.

N: And that change reflected itself in how the library was supported?

B: It did. And how it certainly, I won't say it made it easier to get budget funding, but suddenly you have a greater demand for library services, because as research increases, those same researchers need more support from the library. So it was a lot easier to get faculty support for library budget requests or to you know, help us articulate what some of those needs were.

At the same time though, we couldn't really keep up with the demand. And it was, it was hard really for the library to make the same kind of case as a department chair could make for needing more laboratory space for some big wig researcher who was coming in.

So you know, it kind of cut both ways. And you know, now that I'm retired, I think, in some ways, I like the old Emory better than the new Emory, but that's probably more nostalgia than anything.

N: That's true. I was wondering, is this, is this big change connected with the change in the name of the library from Calhoun to Woodruff?

B: Actually it is, because when, as research grew, the space that we occupied was prime research space. We were one whole floor of the research building. So they pretty much needed to get us out of there. We needed more space as well. They renovated, at the same time they were phasing out the dental program at Emory. They began to recast the space for the dental school, and the library eventually ended up with about two floors in that building.

So as the need for research space grew and they decided to move us out, the Calhoun family, which had endowed the medical library, was approached about continuing that involvement, but for whatever reasons they decided not to do that. And the dental library was being combined with the medical library during that move. And

the nursing library was already part of the medical library, and they got a major gift to endow their library. So now we had three endowed libraries coming together in one building.

They decided to just call it by the name of the health sciences center and then we have those three endowed collections within the health sciences center library.

N: OK. Well, as director for 17 years, who were some of the people that you remember, not necessarily ones who influenced you, but who impressed you in some way in the profession or even at Emory?

B: Probably gosh, there's so many of them, you hate to start naming names. I have to put Lucretia McClure very near the top of that list. And I can think of several instances and ways in which she just left such a good impression on me that I thought that's the kind of library director that I want to be, you know, just sort of matter of fact, obviously honest, a lot of integrity, a lot of commitment to the profession, I mean all of the right words that you want to associate with that I felt she embodied and so she was very, very influential. And, well of course, Miriam Libbey was too, in terms of my development to that point.

But you know, honestly, I think more than, there were a lot of directors, particularly in the southeast, Tom Basler is certainly one of my, continues to be one of my mentors as well as friend. But I think, I learned as much from people who were not directors as well, the Linda Garr Markwells, the Martha Watkins, folks like that who were out there in the trenches day in and day out committed to this. And for people like that, I thought the job of the director was to enable them to do what they loved to do and do so well. So that became my goal, you know, to find ways to get them the money, the administrative support, whatever it was that they needed to continue to do the stuff that they do so well.

And so I looked to those people as my mentors or at least very influential on how I saw the directorship. And then at Emory, there were three or four very key staff members who never had a library degree, but were so committed to their, not only their jobs, but the whole notion of what the library was about that I thought, you know, these are people who mainly came to work in the library while they were in graduate school or even undergraduate school or had just graduated and didn't know what to do with themselves or whatever. And for some reason they kind of got hooked on what we do in libraries and they just dedicated themselves to that. And you'd say why don't you go get your library degree, because particularly in my early years, Emory had a library school.

And well, no, they just, you know, weren't interested in that. But, and many of them are still there, yes. So all of those people really influenced the way I have viewed the role of the director and have tried to act that out in my own life.

N: Well you've done some interesting, somewhat unusual things in your professional life as well, and that one of the things I noted was the Atlanta-Tbilisi Health Partnership and what was that, and how did that come about?

B: That's a program [created by Dr. H. Kenneth Walker] that [Grady Memorial Hospital,] Emory and Morehouse [School of Medicine], Georgia State [University], a number of institutions in Atlanta developed with the Ministry of Health in Georgia.

N: In the ...

B: In the former Soviet Republic of Georgia. And the idea was, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, to help this country provide better health care for its citizens. The country was, and still is, in pretty desperate condition in terms of the availability of modern healthcare, in terms of how they even organize, how they train nurses, physicians, other health workers.

So this partnership was formed and funded under USAID [United States Agency for International Development] probably back in about 1992. I became involved in 1993 when the first group came from Tbilisi to Atlanta, and there were four of them from Tbilisi State Medical University and they were supposed to start off with the medical school administration. But actually that was to be the day after the Memorial Day weekend and no one was going to be in the office that morning. So on Friday before Memorial Day they called up and said, well could we send them to the library that morning. Yes, sure, send them over.

So I got to spend the first morning with them, the whole morning and just show them what a medical library is like, and of course, we had our computer lab and the old what had been audiovisuals, so my roots were showing probably in terms of my interest and how this type of media can be used for medical education.

And they were, they just were so overwhelmed I guess with what they saw and once I got to Tbilisi and saw the National Medical Library there and the library in the medical school, I could see why they were so completely overwhelmed.

But I think it was a wonderful way for them to start off and see how much here we value the relationship between access to information and good quality information resources, as part of the educational process.

And so the partnership, which was begun to really improve medical education has branched out now into a number of other areas, and in '95, I went to Tbilisi to begin work on what became the National Information Learning Centre, which is basically an electronic library service with a handful of printed textbooks. And that opened in 1996, about 18 months after our first visit, which I consider to be a huge accomplishment to get something like that up and running. If you could have seen the building we were moving into, the ceiling was falling down, it was incredibly bad.

N: Did you speak Georgian too?

B: No, no, there's no way I could speak that language. You know, they have their own alphabet, it's a language group unto itself. I did learn how to say a few words, but never really learned how to speak it. But it was a fascinating experience, because Georgia is a country where traditionally women did not play roles of this type of responsibility in any kind of business setting.

The way of doing business is nothing like western capitalism, the form of government is nothing like democracy, you know, it just was totally foreign. And yet the

people are so wonderful and so well meaning. And the people we started working with in 1995 are the people who are still associated with this program. And you know, to me, it's just been a wonderful experience.

I just finished last week revising a new proposal. We were invited two years ago right before I retired, to submit a proposal to the State Department for funding. And that was finally approved last fall, and so we've just been revising the proposal. Of course they don't approve everything you originally propose. And we're now branching into distance education, nursing education and healthcare administration.

It's just been a fabulous project. I wish I could say that the outcome is that now everyone in Georgia is healthy. Well that's not true, not yet. Just takes a long time to bring about those changes.

N: Are you going back to Georgia as part of this, do you think?

B: I don't know. The last time I was there was in 1998, no, yes, 1998. And I'd like to go back, but well, we'll just have to see how the funding works out.

N: Now I also noted that you touched earlier on your interest in camping, and in 1996, Tom Singarella started the nature walks and you seemed to pick up the banner after that and.

B: Well I had to, because he and I had cooked up this idea somewhere along the line and I forgot we just were brainstorming one time at CONBLS [Consortium of Southern Biomedical Libraries] or some meeting and I said, well, you know, you and I both like to hike, why don't we do something. He goes well, yes, we're hosting the meeting next year, so I'll see what I can do. And he sure did. He pulled together a good hike. I think we had six or seven or eight people participate in that. And the following year I think the annual meeting was in Georgia. So that meant it was my turn. So had to be faithful to this little gentlemen's agreement we had made, and ...

N: And you did it for the next three years, I think until you retired.

B: Well I just actually did it the two other years, because the intervening was a joint meeting up in Kentucky I think and it just didn't really work out to fit a slot into the schedule for the hike. So I did it the year we met in Savannah and then the year we met in South Carolina.

N: Now these hikes I have to say were at the Southern Chapter meetings.

B: That's right.

N: And they have not taken place as far as I know since you retired.

B: I don't think so. That's too bad.

N: Yes.

B: Carolyn Brown could do this. She's also a hiker.

N: OK.

B: I've told her she needs to do this, and she's been kind of busy with the Georgia Health Sciences Library Association. She had to do two consecutive terms as chair of that, so maybe she'll pick it up. Or you know, I can come back out of retirement to lead a nature hike one of these days.

N: Absolutely. I know a lot of people would be willing to go.

B: I think so. I think nature brings out the best in most people and it's just a nice way to get better acquainted with your colleagues and kind of have a little break.

N: That's right. Well we've reached the year of your retirement, the year 2000 and at this point in the interview, I'd like to ask you if there are any events or people that you would like to mention here, give special mention to that we maybe have not touched on earlier.

B: Now I have to look at my notes here to see what I might have thought about that I haven't thought of yet. Oh yes, yes there are a couple of things. I guess one of these things that I want to mention as having been important, not only to me, but I think to a number of young librarians, was this regional media consultant, which I have mentioned, but there, you know, when the National Library of Medicine recognized that media, of course, now we think of them as computers and so forth, but audiovisuals were likely to become important in libraries, they were right. And I think they were kind of ahead of the game in many ways, and I give them a lot of credit usually for being ahead of the game most of the time, and in this case, the value not only to the profession, but to those of us who were selected, because most of us were young, and we really were put in a position of having contact with directors, having contact with deans, with hospital administrators very early on in our careers.

And I think that was important, because it gave us more of a total picture of what the world was that we were really trying to work in, rather than just our niche within the library. That was one of the things that I think was important to me and a number of others.

I think the other things are, I mentioned the Atlanta Health Science Libraries Consortium, and the Georgia Health Sciences Libraries Association and both of them were founded in the mid-1970s, and those two groups have been very important to my career development, and to my sense of good feeling, I guess, about the profession. It's nice to see and work with people at all, in all areas of the profession, whether it's a hospital library, a pharmaceutical company library, an academic medical library, wherever it is, around your state, around the region. And as I mentioned to you before, I never really had been that active on the national scene. My one little foray into MLA was on the Grants and Scholarships Committee.

And I really was kind of turned off by the, I guess the tension and the disagreement between the committee leadership and MLA headquarters. I think a lot has changed in the years since to bring a lot more harmony into that, but at that time, I just was very turned off by the whole thing and thought, you know, the national organization is really not where I want to put my time and energy. I think there were problems with the headquarters, but I think there also was a lot of, oh, what's the right word, you know, there are people who want to rise to the top of a national association. And honestly they were pretty brutal to one another and I didn't like that at all.

Whereas in the Southern Chapter, in the statewide association, everyone knew that sooner or later it would be their job to chair this committee, to be this officer or that officer, to play a certain role and we all accepted that responsibility. You might have to say no this year, but you knew that some year you would say yes.

And so I guess you know, working more at this, the local or state or regional level was something that I found to be very important to my own career development. And there were a lot of people there that were influential.

And then finally and probably the reason that you're interviewing me is because of the Southern Chapter Research Committee, which had I never signed up to join that, which I did, because I thought I needed to learn more about library research and because I really admired Jocelyn Rankin and the way she used research in her own library practice, and that got me hooked up with Jocelyn and Cheryl Dee and this whole journal usage study. And that led to the research paper winning the award at MLA, the paper being published in the Bulletin [of the Medical Library Association], the study winning the Chapter of the Year award, and Cheryl and Jocelyn and I getting the [Ida and George] Elliot Prize. I mean, you know, it just, it all stems back to that one event really of the Research Committee for Southern Chapter.

N: And that was just an idea you came up on your own, nobody talked you into it or asked you?

B: About what, to?

N: Joining the Research Committee.

B: I don't really remember exactly how that came about, but I do know that I actively sought it out, which most people don't do for most committees, I admit.

N: True.

B: But I actively sought it out, because I knew it was a deficiency that I had, and because I loved numbers. I used to teach math. And I thought, you know, this, there's something I need to learn and actually it shouldn't be too painful for me. And it was never painful. I loved every minute of it, and even when Jocelyn and Cheryl and I were crunching those numbers at the tail end and trying to analyze the results and so forth.

So, yes, that was a very important moment, I guess, in my development. Well I don't know, I could probably name some others, but I think we'll quit there.

N: OK. Well let me just ask you one final question. What do you see as the future of the profession? Where do you see it going?

B: Well, I hope we can remember to remain true to what we're all about. We've always been about selecting good information and getting it into the hands of people and organizing it so that they can get to it and so forth. And I hope we remember that that's what we're all about.

I do think though, that we need to be more assertive about learning a few new ways of doing that. And I'm concerned now with all this hypertext and jumping from this site on the Internet back into that database into this full text that people lose the context of the information that they're gathering, and may pull it together in ways that either don't make good sense or at least aren't clearly the way that you would have done it in the old way of painstakingly going through these things.

And so I think we need to look at how the literature can be better managed in this new environment, so that people are more likely to find the right context and find, pull the right things together and you know, we've relied so much on medical vocabulary and the thesaurus and so forth, MeSH—keyword searching and using text words are also important. Of course the Internet is driven often by those, and somehow I think we've got to find a better way of pulling that together and recognizing how people now use the resources that, I call it the literature. I think you can still use that word to define it, but it's, it's there's so much that's not evaluated, that comes in sound bites and bits and pieces, and that concerns me.

And so I would think it's the job of our profession to sort that out. If it's not our job, I'm not sure whose it is, but I think somebody needs to sort that out. And I think we should do that.

The other thing I think I would say is that maybe a decade ago our profession was having an identity crisis, you know, will we still have jobs even. I think that's behind us largely, and I think we now realize that our role goes on and we know what we are and what we do, we know who we are and what we do. And I think what we need to do is more actively attract new people into the profession, find ways to really get some of the best minds drawn into the profession, find ways to cultivate those people who are in the profession so that they continue to develop their skills or learn about administration if that's the direction they want to go. And I think the associations, MLA in particular, do a good job of doing that, trying to retarget the CE courses and so forth to those new demands.

But I'm struck by having gone into the placement center at MLA, well not the last two years, but the three years before that to see that there are now many, many more jobs posted than there are people looking for jobs, and it used to be exactly the other way around. And that concerns me. I think there's still work to do to enrich the pool of people, because after all it's the people who are the most important thing in terms of this profession, to enrich that pool, and expand it as much as we can.

So I hope it's a bright future. I think it will be.

N: So do I. So do I. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

B: Oh, I don't know, I think this has been the greatest profession anyone could have been in in the last 30 years. It's just been exciting. So much has changed. It's been fun, yes, it's had its challenges. It has, but I mean basically they've been good things to work on and it's felt good, and I'm happy I'm retired, but, and I don't intend to be an active library consultant or whatever, but I'll never regret having spent my career the way I did. It's been great.

N: Well thank you very much.

B: Well thank you Richard. This has been fun.

N: I'm glad, for me too.

B: Good.



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**Carol A. Burns**

**EDUCATION:** University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
Master of Arts in Library Science (Medical Librarianship), 1974

Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI  
Master of Arts (History), 1972

Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH  
Bachelor of Arts (History, Education), 1967

**LIBRARY  
EMPLOYMENT** Emory University, Atlanta, GA  
Librarian Emerita (Professor Emeritus), 2000—

Robert W. Woodruff Health Sciences Center Library  
(formerly the A. W. Calhoun Medical Library)

- Director, 1984-2000
- Acting Director, 1983-84
- Associate Librarian for Services to the Public, 1979-83
- Audiovisual Librarian and Regional Media Consultant,  
1974-79

Division of Librarianship  
Lecturer, 1979-85

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
Medical Center Library  
Reference Associate, 1973-74

**OTHER  
PROFESSIONAL  
EMPLOYMENT** John Glenn High School, Westland, MI  
Teacher of Mathematics, 1968-69

Asa Woods Junior High School, Libby, MT  
Teacher of History and Mathematics, 1967-68

RECENT  
PUBLICATIONS  
AND  
PRESENTATIONS

"A Life of Learning". Miriam Libbey Memorial Lecture and  
Keynote Address, Georgia Health Sciences Libraries Association  
Annual Meeting, March 16, 2000

Dee, CR, Rankin, JA and Burns, CA, "Using Scientific Evidence  
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Panelist, "Restructuring Health Care and Welfare Systems",  
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Search for New Models, Emory University, March 21, 1997.

Panelist, "The National Information Learning Center, Tbilisi,  
Georgia", International Initiatives Panel, Rollins School of Public  
Health Alumni Conference, 1997.

"Reaching Way Out: The Atlanta-Tbilisi Connection", Southern  
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Information Access Strategies for Ecuador. Anonymous Donor,  
1990-91

HONORS  
AND  
AWARDS

Fellow, Medical Library Association, 2001—

Ida and George Eliot Prize, Medical Library Association (with CR  
Dee and JA Rankin), 2000

Medical Library Association Award for Best Research Paper (with  
CR Dee and JA Rankin) 1996

Distinguished Member, Academy of Health Information  
Professionals, 1995—

PROFESSIONAL  
MEMBERSHIPS

Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries, 1984-2000  
Atlanta Health Sciences Libraries Consortium, 1975--  
Consortium of Southern Biomedical Libraries, 1983--  
Georgia Health Sciences Library Association, 1974--  
Medical Library Association, 1974--  
Southern Chapter/Medical Library Association, 1974--

OTHER  
ACTIVITIES

Atlanta-Tbilisi Health Partnership  
Clifton Child Care Center Board of Directors (1989-2000)  
Nicholas Davies Community Health Information Center Board  
Outward Bound Volunteer  
The Nature Conservancy of Georgia Volunteer